

8 Predictions for College Admissions in 2026



TESTING: "No Score" Means "No Edge"

The Prediction: In a world of grade inflation, test scores are the new tie-breaker for selective majors and merit aid.

The Data: Boston College admitted ~28% of test submitters vs. ~17% of non-submitters.



TECH: AI Reads You First

The Prediction: Algorithms will score and triage your application before a human ever reviews it.

The Data: 80%+ of admissions offices expect to use AI or predictive analytics to review files.



TIMING: Early Is The New "On Time"

The Prediction: Waiting for Regular Decision means fighting for "leftovers" in the most crowded, competitive round.

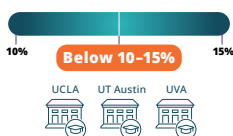
The Data: Selective colleges now fill 40%–70%+ of their classes through Early Action/Decision.



ACTIVITIES: Stacking Is Dead

The Prediction: Long checklists of unrelated clubs are seen as "noise." Colleges want depth and specific skills.

The Data: Admissions leaders rank sustained engagement and rigor far above volume of service hours.



SELECTIVITY: Flagships Rival The Ivies

The Prediction: The "safety flagship" is dead. Public universities are rejecting top students based on major-specific fit.

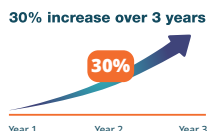
The Data: Out-of-state admit rates at UCLA, UT Austin, and UVA have dropped below 10–15%.



SOCIAL: Politics Is A Deal Breaker

The Prediction: Families are filtering colleges by state laws and social climate before looking at rankings.

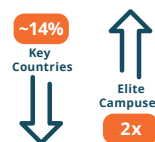
The Data: 1 in 3 students removed a college from their list due to political/social climate concerns.



GEOGRAPHY: The South Is The New "It" Region

The Prediction: Families are flocking South for ROI, school spirit, and internships, making these schools national first choices.

The Data: Early Action applications to the University of Georgia jumped 30%+ in just 3 years.



GLOBAL: The International Split

The Prediction: Elite global brands are more cutthroat than ever, while other U.S. colleges face softening international demand.

The Data: International applications from key countries dropped ~14%, while top global campuses saw double-digit growth.